Lars & the Off Colors' Fantastical Etherian Escapade

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/22532275.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Categories:	F/F, F/M, Multi, Other
Fandoms:	Steven Universe (Cartoon), She-Ra and the Princesses of Power (2018), Shoujo Kakumei Utena | Revolutionary Girl Utena
Relationships:	Lars Barriga & Padparadscha, Himemiya Anthy/Tenjou Utena, Adora (She-Ra)/Pearl (Steven Universe), Lapis Lazuli/Peridot (Steven Universe), Netossa/Spinnerella (She-Ra), Entrapta & Perfuma (She-Ra), Lars Barriga & Off Colors, Bow & Glimmer (She-Ra), Bow & Entrapta (She-Ra), Perfuma & Kelley, Pearl & Steven Universe, Himemiya Anthy & Lapis Lazuli (Steven Universe) & Peridot (Steven Universe) & Tenjou Utena, Lapis Lazuli & Pearl & Adora & Peridot
Characters:	Steven Universe, Pink Steven Universe, Pearl (Steven Universe), Lars Barriga, Fluorite (Steven Universe), Rhodonite (Steven Universe), Rutile Twins (Steven Universe), Padparadscha (Steven Universe), Lapis Lazuli (Steven Universe), Peridot (Steven Universe), Tenjou Utena, Himemiya Anthy, Entrapta (She-Ra), Castaspella (She-Ra), Perfuma (She-Ra), Bow (She-Ra), Angella (She-Ra), Netossa (She-Ra), Frosta (She-Ra), Adora (She-Ra), Glimmer (She-Ra), Cuntinuu Spaziu-Tempu (Original Character), Granjero (Original Character), Kelley (Original Character)
Additional Tags:	Magic, Crystal Gems, Alternate Universe - Crystal Gems (Steven Universe), Alternate Universe - Fantasy, Fantasy, Multiple Crossovers, Crossovers & Fandom Fusions, Crossover Pairings, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, Emotional Hurt, Emotional Baggage, Swords & Sorcery, Established Relationship, Implied Relationships, Developing Relationship, Friendship, Developing Friendships, Relationship(s), Yuri, lapidot - Freeform, Steven Universe is Pink Diamond, Water, Wormholes, Dimension Travel, Octopi & Squid, But which Earth is it...anyway?, What will happen to Glimmer?, Outer Space, Autistic Entrapta (She-Ra), Entrapta's out-of-control portal, Pink Steven on the rampage...again, Adora defending Pearl, Male Character of Color, Original Character(s), Podfic Welcome
Language:	English
Series:	Part 21 of An Unlikely Alliance Against Evildoers
Stats:	Published: 2020-02-02 Words: 8,404 Chapters: 1/1

Lars & the Off Colors' Fantastical Etherian Escapade

by lefemmerouge

Summary

Steven and the Gems have a talk with the Off Colors about the battle with a spacecraft manned by Bonnie and Marcy, the latter who are now one year in the future. Everything quickly gets out of hand, as Steven's temper flairs, leading them to their next adventure beyond the stars…

Notes

OCAC stands for Off Colors Astral Cruiser, while Maynilà is the Filipino name for the city of Manila, Peri stands for Peridot, RT stands for Rutile Twins, Apta is the nickname for Entrapta, Perfuma is the nickname for Fuma, and Pappy stands for Padparadscha. I also took some inspiration from my silly story, "Revenge of Pink Steven and the Bento Brawl".

Comments are welcome and appreciated.

Update #1 on 2/7/25: I changed the rating of this fic to Teen and Up, which seemed more appropriate.

Update #2 on 2/11/25: This fic was cross-posted on Squidge World, with the same title, where it was revised with changes to formatting, wording, and content, to make it stronger than the original. If you would like to read the original, without the revisions, you can still do so on Wattpad.

See the end of the work for more notes

The *OCAC* touched down on the Maynilà's domestic airport runway. Lars and the Off Colors were greeted by Pearl, Adora, Lapis, Peri, and Steven. Although Lars knew that Steven had *a clear motive* in mind for the meeting, he didn't know why he had been called there.

"Pearl and Adora told me about the mysterious ship that flew over Maynilà, chasing *another spacecraft*. Adora recounted that a medical kit came from the same ship right after Pearl injured herself when firing her shotgun at it. Lars, Off Colors, do you know ANYTHING about this?"

Before any of the Off Colors could say anything, Lars marched forward. Clearing his throat, he aggressively stamped on the ground and asserted himself.

"My unit was *within its rights* to protect this planet from external threats by any means necessary. Steven, maybe you should admit something: telling me to determine if the Diamonds were lying, *to you*, and to be 'ambassadors for Earth' without consulting any of your friends."

Steven shuttered. He hadn't expected Lars to be this defensive. Perhaps he had taken the attitude from him or from his adventures out in space. In any case, he became incensed. Suddenly, Steven's skin turned pink and he exerted a pink aura. "You said…WHAT! APOLOGIZE!"

Lars gingerly stepped back. Pearl, Adora, Lapis, and Peri formed a protective line in front of him, shocked by Steven's new appearance. "Steven! This isn't you…snap out of it! Let's talk sensibly."

Steven tried to tell Pearl to back off. "Pearl…this is between me and Lars…*you don't* have any part in it."

In a fit of unbridled rage, he smashed Pearl into the ground, causing her to whimper like a deer hit by a flaming arrow. Writhing in agony, Adora stood in front of Pearl, and shouted "for the honor of Greyskull!" turning into She-Ra. Somehow her powers could manifest themselves on Earth despite the dimensional drift and without her sword.

"What is wrong with you? Why did you hurt Pearl? *Stop* injuring other people!"

Steven tried to explain himself. "I…want to squelch Lars…for what he said…Pearl was in the way…"

Adora would do anything to protect Pearl, even if it put her in danger. "I don't want to hurt you, but *I will*, if you lay one more finger on my precious Pearl or any of my friends. Stand down, you pink monster!"

Steven put his hand to his mouth, realizing his error. He breathed deeply. His pink skin and aura receded. He returned to normal.

"Pearl, I'm sorry for doing that…This pink form is *uncontrollable*…it's a new thing that happens when my emotions flare up…even so, *I don't* appreciate what Lars said."

As she whimpered in pain, Pearl asked Steven directly: "Is Lars right? Did you ask them to find out if Diamonds were lying to you or to be 'ambassadors for Earth'? Why didn't you ask me and the other Crystal Gems, and your friends, first? Wouldn't that have been the *sensible* thing to do?"

Steven sighed. He bowed his head shamefully. He had to come clean. "Lars is right. I didn't like the way he mentioned it and I stand by that. I would have asked you, the other Gems, and my friends, like Adora. But, I thought I could do it on my own. That was *my mistake*."

Such a response shook Pearl and Adora. Lapis proposed that she take Steven back to Beach City to reflect on his actions. He nodded in agreement. Her water wings expanded. Peri waved to her and Steven, as they flew into the distance.

Pearl came toward Lars and the Off Colors. "Lars, do you and the Off Colors still want to be ambassadors for Earth? I'd really appreciate it…as would the other Gems," Pearl said.

Lars responded shortly thereafter, remarking, "Why, of course! What about this Diamond message thing?"

Pearl explained what this was all about. "You can look into that *too*. But we shouldn't be alone here…Steven needs some new friends as do...the rest of us…thanks for defending the Earth from that unidentified ship."

Lars then asked, "It's my honor. What about that message Steven mentioned?"

Pearl than explained what it was. "Oh, it's a letter that came from those you were chasing."

Lars was intrigued. He wanted to know what this letter said. "Really? I'd love to read that."

Lars looked over the letter with extreme interest. He turned up his eyebrows after reading it. "Huh. I guess they were two women in love…are they connected to *that candy settlement* Steven told me about in Japan?"

Pearl warned him to stay ready. She *didn't* want him to get hurt. "I'm not sure yet, but we'll look into it."

Lars sighed. He noted that he didn't have much information either. "I wish we knew more. You all stay prepared. The tracker we put on their ship appears to have gone dark...maybe they traveled through time!"

He paused for a second and continued, stating, "do you have any recommendations for any planets we should go to first?"

Pearl scratched her head. The question baffled her. She had been on Earth so long. The *only* other planet she had lived on was Homeworld, although she had traveled elsewhere with Pink.

Adora popped in, standing next to Pearl. She was now back in her usual unaltered form. "Why don't you go to Etheria?"

Lars smiled and agreed. He added, "We can get there *without* using that wormhole that kept you and the other Gems on the planet for a couple years. I'd rather not use... that form of transit."

Lars rounded up the other crew members and prepared to leave. Rhodonite reminded him of something which had slipped his mind. "What about the *ABB*? Don't we need a new autonomous ship?"

Grumbling, Lars realized she was right, then turned to Peri. In a bubbly way, he asked her, "hey, can you make an autonomous plane for us?"

Peri was excited. Finally she could make something to help other people! "Why, sure, my fine friend! I can retrofit *my Peri-Jet* for you. Its in Miura, Japan, right now. Let's fly there together in your *beautiful* ship!"

Lars grinned widely at her comment. He brought Peri inside the ship and waved goodbye to everyone. As the ramp closed, Peri yelled to Pearl that she'd like to discuss something about the mysterious visitors that day with her. She yelled back one word: "YES!"

Not long later, the *OCAC* landed closed to the farm, which sat next to the house where Utena and Anthy lived. They stared up at the ship and were puzzled. They hadn't expected any visitors. Utena prepared her katana and Anthy readied her magical powers. A glimpse of Peri's face calmed them both, causing them to recede. "Welcome to *our* farm and homestead! What brings you here today, fellow travelers?"

Lars spoke for him and the Off Colors. "Misses, we are here because Peri agreed to fix up her ship to replace the one destroyed in our dogfight with that unidentified ship earlier today."

Utena responded. "Feel free to go ahead. If you'd like, my partner, Anthy, can cook up some food for you all."

Lars smiled. He wanted to be gracious while stating their preferences. "Not right now, but if any of us change my mind then we will say so…the others on my ship have Gems, so they *don't* have to eat."

Peri grabbed her visor and began reworking wires inside the *OCAC* after getting permission from the Off Colors. Working together, the Off Colors, Lars, Anthy, and Utena pushed the Peri-Jet inside the ship's hull. A few hours passed and the changes had been made, thanks to Peri working hard to finish it.

Peri exhaled deeply after the hard work. "There we go! All done! The Peri-Jet is now the *Peri Autonomous Sailing Talisman*…which I call *PAST*! Nyehehe!...I hope it will bring you all *good luck*…Anything else you'd like me to do?"

Lars shook her hand. He was grateful for her work on this ship. "No, I think that's all. Thanks for working on this."

Peri waved back at Lars, after taking her hand out of the handshake. "My pleasure. Happy travels!," she said, while smiling.

The *OCAC* skyrocketed off the ground and into the atmosphere. Lapis came flying in and hugged Peri, who fell into her arms. She was completely exhausted from all her work on the spaceship.

Lars sat down in his captain's chair. He ordered Fluorite to activate their nova thrusters. After plugging in the coordinates, he told the Rutile Twins to warp them to Etheria. Both nodded at his requests. They fulfilled what he had requested, without delay. The ship disappeared in a flash of light, accelerating through the universe to a planet many light years away.

Arriving in the orbit of Etheria, on what would have been June 15 or June 16, in 2019, to use Earth time measurements, their transmitter emitted static. A recording began playing:

> *Welcome to the planet of Etheria, recently unified by the Compact signed by all the Princesses. Your enthusiasm is appreciated, please…*

This was cut off by two more transmissions:

> *The planet has descended into a state of war. The Coalition of Organizational Dignity on Etheria, CODE, headquartered in Mystacor, has brought together the entities of Mystacor, Plumeria, Elberon, Thaymor, and Alwyn into one force. The rascals in Bright Moon, Salineas, and Snows have formed their own alliance. We recommend, for your safety, that you stay away until we work this out…*
>
> *A group of upstarts known as the Coalition of Organizational "Dignity" has formed, headed by a former Princess who gave herself the grandiose title of "Chief Bureaucrat"...We, the Alliance of Royal Restoration, ARR for short, based out of Bright Moon, aim to restore order and REAL dignity to this planet…unlike those ne'er-do-wells!*

The situation left Lars in a state of confusion. He didn't want to interfere in the affairs of other planets even though Steven, nor the Gems, had prevented him from interfering. He asked Rhodonite, the head of strategic operations, for consul. This seemed like an odd choice since she could be easily spooked and incredibly stressed out, depending on the situation.

She pondered an answer and fired back: "Let's head to Mystacor, as the message from that group appeared more conciliatory, while the other gave the impression of outright hostility."

RT then said her piece. "I agree with Rhodonite. It is the best option at the present. We *don't* want to get involved in the dispute between two warring groups on this planet."

Thinking about what his fellow shipmates said, he responded to them the best he could. "Rhodonite and RT, I agree with you...both. RT, work with Fluorite to get us to the planet's surface. Rhodonite, try to contact with those in Mystacor."

Like she had before Rhodonite remarked "Aye, shorty!" No one knew where this phrase had come from, but Rhodonite picked it up at *some point.*

As the ship descended, the receiver sputtered. There was a response to Rhodonite's message: *We hear you loud and clear. Over.*

Rhodonite relayed a simple response to the being on the other end of the receiver: "Affirmative. Please relay coordinates for landing site."

The coordinates were sent forthwith, showing their dedication to bringing in outsiders to their former kingdom.

As the ship began to touch down, due to RT's careful piloting, showing her usefulness in this time of uncertainty, Rhodonite detected a projectile. "Captain! Hostile weapon detected a few clicks away. What are your orders?"

Lars gave her a command, quickly. "Raise the shields and prepare the cannons *for combat*."

The projectiles were not missiles like those fired by the *BRIOS*, but rather fast-moving ice shards. The ship's cannons, charged up, fired upon the shards. The others bounced off the shield around Mystacor. Such a protective barrier was undoubtedly a joint effort of Apta and Fuma, symbolic of their growing friendship.

After their spaceship touched down softly, Pappy, Rhodonite, the Rutile Twins, and Fluorite, left their chairs, following Captain Lars. Apta and Castaspella greeted them.

"Welcome to Mystacor! I'm Castaspella, the head sorceress of the realm of Mystacor. We *hope* you enjoy your stay here…"

Apta played that down. She was more excited than her friend. "Yeah, yeah, Casta, we get it… but they aren't tourists…they are interstellar travelers from Earth…tell me all about it! I know Adora went there, but I've never been…"

Explaining themselves would be important. Lars introduce the group. "Sure! We really came here as Earth's ambassadors…visiting planets in hopes of creating more allies with our blue planet…I'm Lars, the captain of this fine ship, and this is my crew: Pappy, Fluorite, Rhodonite, and RT."

Apta then bowed. She remarked, "Welcome to you all. I can give you a tour of the facilities… I forgot to introduce myself. I'm Entrapta, but you can call me 'Apta.' I am the Chief Bureaucrat here…"

Before she could say anything else, Rhodonite said something. She didn't want to be rude or anything, but she felt that this was worth mentioning. "…we heard from the other transmission."

Apta grimaced. She hoped it hadn't come to this. "Oh, those ARR jerks *again*…they really have a way of spinning things. I also like inventing stuff and doing cool experiments."

Pappy observed the surroundings in amazement. She had never seen a place like it before. She couldn't help herself. She unconsciously exclaimed. "I foresee that we will meet a brilliant scientist and inventor named Entrapta. What a wonder!"

Apta found Pappy's observation weirdly fascinating. Even with their elemental powers, none of the Princesses did *anything* like that. "Why is she talking about something which already happened?"

Lars chuckled. It was actually pretty easy to explain her forecasts. "Oh, that's Pappy. Her power is to foresee events after they transpire. She is the technical advisor on my ship. Such an ability is *really* helpful in tight situations!"

Apta continued to be intrigued. She had never seen something like this before. "Okay, cool. Do all of you have *powers*?"

Lars spoke on behalf of the group, but also about himself. He remarked, "We do! My friend brought me back to life and turned me this pink color, and my head can be used to access a portal dimension back to Earth. The rest of my comrades were considered 'off colors,' cast aside because they didn't fit the mold of a strict society, where the galactic dictators threatened to *shatter them*, declaring these Gems were defective."

Apta could sympathize. She told Lars, "That's awful! I'm glad you are here and away from such a place."

He lamented that they would go back there at some point, but not anytime soon. It was a horrid place for many years. "*Someday* we will go back…in the meantime, we are visiting different planets," he remarked.

As she began her tour, Fuma came running up, and beamed. "Hello everyone! I'm Perfuma. You can call me 'Fuma.' I *used* to be a Princess who controlled a plant kingdom, but now 'm living here with Apta, one of my best friends. We are working on some amazing stuff together. It's so exciting! Glad to meet you all!"

The appearance of the Off Colors fascinated Fuma. She especially liked the orange hair of Pappy, the multicolored hair of Rhodonite, the red hair of the Rutile Twins, the blue hair of Fluorite, and the light pink hair of Lars. After getting permission, she touched their hair, enjoying its texture on her hands. Before she went too far, however, Apta pulled her back, warning her to be kind to these guests. She bowed and apologized.

Animated, Apta babbled about the bureaucratic structures in Mystacor. She talked about how the schism between them and the opposing alliance had begun. Before Lars or any of the Off Colors could pose a question, she headed them off and sighed. "We want to end this war and are willing to negotiate, but those in the other alliance are *completely obstinate*, especially because they are led by this princess-turned-queen…"

Fuma added onto what Apta said. She told them that, "My good friend Apta is right. The woman who leads them is named Glimmer. She wants to annihilate us from what we have heard…and seems to be keeping the rest of them in line. Her terror tactics haven't worked though, as those who used to live in Snows, Salineas, and Bright Moon *have fled*, have agreed to work for us…"

Apta proceeded to build on what Fuma had said. They liked completing each other's thoughts. "It's a great arrangement! We have a *legion of bureaucrats* now, plus a self-defense

force which mans our defensive weapons, ensures our protective shield is maintained. We have some who are negotiators, conduct recon, or are scientists. They are assisting me with the Runestone Draining Project and with building robots."

Apta didn't mention the presence of Bow, George, Lance, and Angella in Mystacor, or the Archives of Etheria to these new visitors. You might think that Mystacor would be crowded, but the citizenry used their knowledge and ability to organize themselves in a bureaucratic manner to ensure that the space available would be used efficiently and effectively without *any* waste. Not one square of ground would be wasted.

Opening a large door, Lars and the Off Colors observed many people furiously typing on keyboards in their selected rooms. They were staring at screens as they keyed in the information that had been gathered. The electric power for the facility came from the sun and wind, but also from geothermal elements. Apta hoped that the runestones of the Princesses could be used in the future, seeing it as a more reliable resource than these others.

Before she could show them more and talk about her job there in Mystacor, alarm bells began to ring. A robotic voice hollered:

Incoming projectiles detected. Signatures of magical Princesses detected. Please take shelter immediately.

Fuma rolled her eyes. She called out to a nearby soldier, telling them to activate the electrical defense field. Although Frosta, Glimmer, Mermista, Netossa, and Spinnerella had disowned her, she *still* wanted to immobilize them before they caused any destruction.

As Apta climbed into her robot, she suggested Fluorite stay behind to support the engineers in Mystacor, a condition she agreed to with the support of Lars. Like the rainbow fluorite gem, she could absorb spiritual energy, allowing her to bring inner peace, understanding, or unity to any group. This made her valuable to those in Mystacor. Pappy, Rhodonite, the Rutile Twins, and Lars all squeezed inside.

Apta gave the order for Fuma, Castaspella, Bow, and Angella to follow her, all of whom complied.

Reaching an open clearing, Apta stopped her machine and stepped out, as did the Off Colors. The crackling of electricity frightened Rhodonite, who cowered, her paranoia worsening. Sliding down the hill, Apta smiled at the annoyed Princesses, writhing in agony. "Sorry, you *no-good Princesses*, but I couldn't let you hurt the people of Mystacor and run amok."

Netossa cried out. "Entrapta…or Apta as you now call yourself…*let us go*! We wouldn't mind talking, despite that *legal trickery*, ensuring that you avoided a trial…"

Apta shook her finger at her. She would not let them control her life. "Netossa, I'd love to, but if I turn off this grid, you'll capture me and imprison me in a net…while Spinnerella will blow away my friends behind me. Then, Glimmer, Mermista, and Frosta will advance ahead and *destroy* Mystacor."

Frosta scowled, her eyes meeting those of Apta. "If you even touch Glimmer, I'll smash you to kingdom come."

Apta shrugged. She didn't care for such hostility. "Such hostile words from a member of an alliance which wants to restore royal rule across the planet and declares it has 'dignity'. I see through the deception. I knew you wouldn't want to talk. That's not why I came here today. I wanted to introduce *our visitors* from Earth."

Lars, Pappy, Rhodonite, and the Rutile Twins gingerly advanced. "Hello, esteemed Princesses and friends…er, foes, we come from Earth as ambassadors, by recommendation of my friend, Steven, and his guardians. We don't wish to get involved in your dispute. We only came to ensure our blue planet isn't by itself in the universe. That's it."

Glimmer howled with laughter. "You really want us to believe that? If you were neutral in this conflict, then *why* didn't you come to Bright Moon first?...that would have been the logical thing to do."

Rhodonite, in an unusual move, stamped on the ground and screamed back defiantly. "We heard the messages from your alliance and CODE. Hearing both, *we decided* that the one sent by CODE was not hostile, unlike the message broadcast by your alliance. As such, we decided to land our spaceship there. Besides, *one of you* tried to shoot us down with some ice projectiles, so that was another reason."

Frosta sheepishly shrugged, aware that *she* had been the one that fired the ice spears toward the *OCAC*. Realizing her mistake, she bowed toward them. "Please forgive me, space travelers. I thought my friend Glimmer would be harmed by your ship which I perceived to be a new weapon to be used against us."

Lars smiled. He chuckled, straining to keep the peace and not take sides. "No harm, no foul. We would like to see the other parts of this world, if you don't mind. As for this dispute, it should be something you all work out for yourselves."

Fuma piped in. She wanted to show them Plumeria, currently ruled by her brother, and promised to show them the city-state of Elberon, controlled by Mayor Abbelina, the Commune of Alwyn, ruled by Chief Executive Granjero, and the Republic of Thaymor, led by Governor Pax. Lars obliged and recommended the Rutile Twins return to Mystacor to keep Fluorite company, accompanied by Bow.

Fluorite who was focused on enhancing unity and connection as the former head of the Off Colors, fit in this magical realm. At the same time, Angella, Castaspella, and Apta continued to watch over the Princesses, unable to move since they were stuck in a magic-proof electric cage created by Apta.

Singing happily with pep in her step, Fuma prattled on about the Whispering Woods. Lars didn't feel frightened by this new environment, even as Pappy and Rhodonite hid behind him in fear. Before they knew it, all four had reached the royal realm of Plumeria.

A cheery face greeted them. It was Fuma's brother, Kelley. He was currently the sovereign of Plumeria until a new leader was elected through a democratic vote by the populace.

"Welcome to Plumeria, fellow journeyers! Perfuma, it’s great to see you again…with all this war and conflict, I hadn't heard from you in a while…it worried me."

The hearts of Pappy and Rhodonite were made warm when they observed how the Plumerians lived in close-knit family units clustered around delicate trees and plants. As a fusion of a Ruby and a Pearl, these living arrangements made them both smile inside their perma-fusion. Lars worried about them, noting that while many were involved in agriculture, living in yurts or tents, no defensive system had been set up.

"With all the violence on this planet, *how* do you defend from attack by outsiders?"

Kelley chuckled. He explained it all to him. "My fine pink-haired man, the people here are optimistic, nonviolent, peaceful, and do not want to engage in combat. They have been living here for thousands of years, preserving our history in wood carvings, whether in the tree with the heart blossom or elsewhere…we did let Perfuma's friend, Entrapta, install *a shield generator* for us, and some other devices. Due to our alliance with our friends in Mystacor, *we feel safe*."

Kelley's response peaked Lars' interest but also reassured him. This assuaged his worries about the Plumerians and their safety.

Lars, Pappy, Rhodonite, Kelley, and Fuma ate a lunch together, chowing down on the fruits and other foods available. As noon approached, Fuma announced the necessity of traveling to Elberon, Thaymor, and Alwyn. She beckoned goodbye to her brother as they departed. Walking through the woods, with Rhodonite, Pappy, and Lars following behind Fuma, her message pad beeped. She typed in three words on her message pad to Apta: "Activate RDP ASAP," receiving the response of "Affirmative."

Her device had a touchscreen, a few buttons, a stylus, and a virtual keyboard, while recognizing handwriting and finger strokes. It resembled early personal digital assistants (PDAs) in Earth's history which had long been abandoned since they could be imprecise and infuriating to control.

The next stop was the Commune of Alwyn. Previously, the most important provider of supplies for the Princess Alliance and a farming community, it bustled with activity. Granjero, the Chief Executive, welcomed them, in a manner which echoed Kelley in Plumeria. "Hello! We are *so glad* to have visitors! With the war, very few have ventured out here. We provide supplies to those in Mystacor and allied sovereignties."

Lars had some questions. He inquired about their recordkeeping and governmental system.

Granjero had a jolly and hearty laugh. "What a smart man we have! We keep paper records *here.* Those which are not active we transmit to the Archives of Etheria in Mystacor for future generations. We have a strong direct democracy, with measures in place to separate church and state, providing the equal right to vote for all peoples, prohibiting child labor, fines imposed on workers by their employers, and ending of any previous debt. The people are the real rulers of our state, not in *a faux way* like those on this planet which consider themselves part of the ARR, claim…what utter scoundrels!"

The sentiment of Granjero and the democratic atmosphere excited Lars even more that Plumeria, which he saw as ingenious. He wanted to learn about Elberon, a city-state, Thaymor, a republic, and Plumeria, sovereign entities also within the Whispering Woods. Unfortunately, he wouldn't be able to gather information about any of those places. Fuma received a message on her device, the Aptapad, calling it "AP" for short:

RDP initiation sequence engaged. Return to home base pronto.

Using her plant powers, she grabbed Lars, Pappy, and Rhodonite, dragging them behind her. She announced the necessity for their departure, hollering to Granjero about the RDP, to which he nodded. A few Alwynians were dispatched to tell Thaymor, Elberon, and Plumeria of the development, so all could prepare themselves. Although Lars could have broken through the thick vines on his own, he accepted his fate, like his fellow comrades. As she pulled them to Mystacor, sapping her strength, Lars inquired about something he couldn't understand. "*Why* can't we go to Elberon and Thaymor?"

Fuma told him to not get involved. She gave an excuse for it. "We are in a full-blown war… and the last stage is about to be executed. It would be *a pity* to see you or your compatriots to be caught up in such an ugly sight…it aligns with your perceptions, saying we should work out our own problems *without* interference."

Fuma slumped on the ground. Lars, Pappy, and Rhodonite were carried inside the protective shield surrounding Mystacor, then plopped next to their ship. The Rutile Twins and Fluorite met them, grinning. The Rutile Twins whispered to Lars, explaining the situation to him, with each one of them speaking in alternating words and sentences, repeating what the other had said, in a different way. He bobbed his head, telling his fellow comrades to join him on the ship. As the nova thrusters began powering up, Lars stood on the ramp, addressing all those assembled (Fuma, Angella, and Castaspella) as an exiting committee:

"Revered guests, we appreciate your hospitality during our visit on this planet. While the ravages of war prevented us from visiting many locations, I can express, speaking for myself, and on behalf of my shipmates, your gratefulness. We have learned more about this planet, which I will communicate, as will my fellow compatriots, to those on Earth. We promise to come back at a future time and finish our tour, hopefully under *better circumstances*."

Fuma replied, staring at Lars, his red cape blowing in the wind. "Thank you for stopping in Etheria. We are duty-bound to put our affairs in order, but we welcome you back anytime. Communicate our best wishes to Adora on Earth."

Lars bowed and remarked, "Will do, Fuma! Thank you everyone!"

The ramp closed as the *OCAC* ascended, passing through the defensive shield around Mystacor and into the planet’s atmosphere. Lars sat in the captain's chair and cracked a smile. Looking around, admiring his surroundings, the three consoles near the front of the ship's bridge, and the radiant color inside, he addressed his compatriots:

"I'm glad to be aboard the ship once more, so we continue our adventure together! RT, pilot us out of the planet's gravitational pull…*journey onward*!"

Rhodonite told him, "It would be my pleasure, captain. Your wish is my command."

Back on Etheria, the situation had changed for the worse. Apta stood a few paces away from the clearing in the Whispering Woods where Mermista, Spinnerella, Frosta, Glimmer, and Netossa were trapped by an electric cage. She pressed a button on her touchpad and the cage dissipated into nothingness. Mermista attempted to learn Apta's real plan.

"Entrapta, what's this all about? We can end this all now, like you don't need to hurt us. We are willing to negotiate and *accept any terms*."

Apta cackled. The plan had only begun. "My sweet Mermista, *how naive* you are. The fun has only *started*."

Into her device, she screamed the following words: "Engage RDP." A robotic voice bellowed. Its message made the Princesses shake in fear: *Acknowledged, Chief Bureaucrat Entrapta. Project execution in ten seconds.* Ten seconds passed and the voice roared again: *Project energized and active.*

Frosta, Glimmer, and Mermista howled in pain. Their hearts throbbing, they fell, weak and fatigued. Even when fighting the armies of the Horde alongside Adora, none of them had felt like they did at that moment. Spinnerella and Netossa stood on guard, ready to strike down Apta. "Entrapta, *what have you done*?"

Apta shook her head. Sometimes the princesses just annoyed the heck out of her. "Spinnerella, you would *never* understand. Its all part of my project to *drain the runestones* of their power, routing their power through the heartstone in Plumeria, so those people can live peacefully. I couldn't let *any* of you Princesses ruin my plans for a better world. Now, we can be on an even playing field."

Glimmer snarled. She crawled over to Apta, expressing her dismay and disgust. "We will get back at you for this, Entrapta…we will use the power to defeat your evil plans."

Apta would not unfazed. She would do this, no matter the costs. "*Evil*? Glimmer, you are mistaken. Without the power of your runestones, all of you are common laborers. There is *no need* for royal rule on this planet anymore. This planet should be run democratically. I am only serving as *the agent* for a sweeping change."

Frosta would not put up with this, not for a second. "We have weapons back in Bright Moon, Snows, and Salineas. Our loyal subjects *will ensure* that you go down once and for all!"

Apta snickered. She couldn't believe how arrogant the princesses were being. "Oh, Frosta, those people you call 'loyal subjects' are working for the Coalition of Organizational Dignity on Etheria, whether on Mystacor, or elsewhere. They agreed with my plan and of those in Mystacor. Your royal realms *have fallen*. Your reign of terror *is over*. Glimmer and Mermista, that goes for you too."

This bold talk from Apta surprised the Princesses. Netossa wouldn't let something like this pass unchecked. She approached Apta, tip toeing. "How can we trust you? What evidence do

you have that proves your assertion that our kingdoms have 'fallen' as you claim?"

Apta *knew* that some of the Princesses would challenge her. She made clear that she was not bluffing. "Don't believe me? I'll prove it to you. *Just watch the screen*."

Everyone crowded around her small device, squeezing in tightly. A three-way split screen showed people marching and cheering in Bright Moon, Snows, and Salineas. They were chanting "down with the Princesses!" They were assisted by robots Apta and her fellow comrades commanded. Glimmer, Frosta, and Mermista gazed at the screens, aghast at the sight before them.

Netossa and Spinnerella saw this as a chance to attack. They thought that combining their efforts would "save" their friends. "Entrapta, your time is up! Prepare to meet *your doom*!"

Netossa manipulated magic energy into nets, hoping to encumber Apta. Her efforts proved futile, so Spinnerella attempted to generate a miniature tornado, directing it in her direction. Its effects were mitigated by a huge vacuum, draining her powers akin to what had happened to the other Princesses. The same happened to Netossa too. Their energy had *been sucked* into what Apta had dubbed the *Wind-Net Analyzer Project* (*WNAP*).

She clapped, sauntering toward a delirious Netossa and Spinnerella. "Congratulations for showing the potential of the *WNAP*. I wasn't sure about it, but I am glad this experiment worked. Since you are all tired, let's talk about next steps in my laboratory in Mystacor. My comrades will *bring you inside*."

Not having any energy to argue, all the princesses acquiesced, hoping to make the best of a bad situation. Loaded onto a cart, Castaspella created a bridge across the floating islands so they could be wheeled into Mystacor. Once inside the protective barrier, the bridge disappeared into dust like it had never existed in the first place.

Groaning, all five Princesses awoke to find themselves sitting in chairs within Apta's lab. Such a place existed only in a magical underground dimension of Mystacor, created recently.

"Welcome to my workspace. Now, all of you have had either had your magic abilities dulled, in the case of Spinnerella and Netossa, or *completely drained*, in the case of Glimmer, Frosta, and Mermista. I'm not the ruler of this world, but I hope you all want to move this planet forward to a brighter future. *The only condition* is that you cannot be rulers again, only lending a hand in the self-governance of your former subjects."

Contemplating this choice, Mermista wanted some clarification before making a final decision on Apta's proposal. It meant a good deal since the planet remained in flux. "*If* we agree to assist in this quest for planetary betterment, like can we stay on the planet?"

Apta smiled. She was glad that someone had at least some sense. "Sure! I want all of us to work together and make this world a better place. After Glimmer threatened annihilation of her 'enemies,' the Runestone Draining Project appeared to be the *only option*. Drastic times called for dire measures…it will take time to readjust to not having your powers, but I want

to give you the choice. I *can always* have the project re-engineered to strengthen your connections to the runestones…if you so desire."

Mermista grumbled. She agreed to the terms. "Apta, *I'll agree* to your proposal. No need for a connection to a runestone, I'll try it out...Frosta, Glimmer, Spinnerella, and Netossa, do *you* want to join me?"

Frosta uttered the word "yes," followed by the same from Spinnerella and Netossa. Glimmer refused to join the other Princesses. She slammed her foot on the ground and hollered.

"*NONE* of you will listen to me! You are going to accept a loss of your capability to control magic for some *phony baloney idea*…where the people decide their own fate? *What is wrong* with all of you!? I'll have to travel to another planet…where people will listen to me. People *should respect me*, not treat me like some common peasant!"

Frosta was concerned about her friend. She asked, "Glimmer, you won't even have your powers…*how* can you command an army?"

Glimmer sneered at her. She wouldn't put up with this. "That doesn't matter, Frosta! I have innate leadership ability, unlike the *rest of you*. All of you are phonies and fakes *who think* you matter. I'm done with it all. I completely understand why Adora left…she *couldn't stand* any of you jerks anymore."

Speaking to one of Apta's confidantes, Glimmer ordered the woman to activate an inter-dimensional portal, threatening to bash their head in with her staff if she didn't comply. Terrified, the woman hurriedly pressed buttons. Once activated, she could travel through the folds of space time. Apta messaged Bow, telling him to come down to her lab *immediately* to prevent Glimmer from doing something dangerous which could kill her.

About to enter the gateway, she heard Bow's voice. She spun around and faced him. "Glimmer, please don't go! Now that the war has ended, we can spend time together again… and be the Best Friend Duo…it would *break my heart* if you left," he told her.

Glimmer would not listen to this. She had to go. "I *have to* do this…no one here respects me…I can't thrive in a toxic environment like the one fostered on this planet. I wanted to obliterate the enemy. But *it* stands before us in the form of Entrapta. It is now clear you were *all* conspiring behind my back, wanting me to cave in…"

Bow tried to reassure her. What she was thinking was not right in the slightest. He had to make to clear to her. "No, no, you have it all wrong. Entrapta *isn't our enemy*. She wants to lend a hand. You can reconnect with me, your mother, your aunt, everyone here…we are *all* your friends."

Glimmer sighed. She had to tell Bow why she was doing all of this. She at least owed him that, although she wasn't sure she could trust him, sad to say. "YOU can't recognize what I've been through, Bow. My mother *abandoned me* for another side in a civil war. You, my best friend, did the same. I was lonely in Bright Moon. I can't stand it anymore. If I die in the vacuum of space, *so be it.*"

Sobbing, Bow choked up. He could only mouth three words: "Fine, go then."

The portal whirred and Glimmer spun around. She had begun moving across the planes of time and space. Like the time when Samurai Jack tried to travel back to Earth through a portal in the Fright Zone, this didn't work out as she planned. Robotic voices rang out with continual frequency, scaring the remaining Princesses, Bow, and Apta. The voices said: *Warning. Portal Malfunction. Warning. Portal…*

The message kept repeating until Apta's compatriot turned it off. Red caution lights continued to flare, worrying everyone. She tried to rework the path through spacetime, rapidly tapping on the keyboard. Having their fingers crossed, Bow, Mermista, Spinnerella, Frosta, and Netossa thought Apta had fixed it. Another error blared, dashing her efforts. This wasn't good. *Warning. Intersecting spacetime distortion detected. Warning…*

Again, it continued before Apta turned it off. She knew what this meant. She guessed that something had intersected with Glimmer's path through spacetime. She gasped.

"This isn't good. I don't think there is anything I can do. I think the ship that left this planet not that long ago, commanded by those visitors from Earth, tried to move through spacetime and crisscrossed our spacetime pathway. Glimmer is safe, but she could end up *anywhere* at this point…and there's *no turning back*."

Apta guessed correctly. The *OCAC*, halfway through its warp through the plains of space, had been thrown off course by dimensional waves from the portal in Mystacor. Rhodonite shrieked. Despite all their adventures together, nothing like this had ever occurred before. She anticipated the captain would provide some calming guidance to tamp down her paranoia. "Captain, what's going on? Is it the Diamonds? Are they *trying* to enact revenge?"

Lars was terrified himself. He breathed deeply and calmed himself. This couldn't anything worse than what they had already been through, right? "I am not sure…but it appears to be a dimensional drift. We should ride with these waves, taking the good with the gnarly. We are exploring space after all. Let's *have fun*!"

Rhodonite perked up. Lars didn't answer her questions, but his cheery attitude made her feel better about herself and regain self-confidence. Like clockwork, Pappy made a 'prediction': "I foresee that dimensional waves will ripple across space-time and cause danger *to all of us*… oh my…what a dilemma!"

Lars cackled, adding, "Thanks, Pappy…you are such reliable guide and will always be an honored member of this ship!" He said this, realizing that Pappy's visions of events slightly in the past *weren't super useful* and cognizant of the fact that she had a delayed reaction to events that transpire in real time. That meant that the other Off Colors often had to step in to save her.

A bluish glow surrounded the ship, pulling it across the plane of space-time, and into a wormhole. As everyone else screamed, Lars sat back, enjoying the ride. He remained calm, believing that everything would work itself out eventually.

In Mystacor, Apta bit her fingernails nervously. Glimmer was stuck in a sort of spacetime limbo. The Earth-origin ship, commanded by Captain Lars, pulled energy from the inter-dimensional gateway. She didn't want to turn the device off since it could endanger the life of Lars, his comrades, and Glimmer. The distortion in spacetime caused the machine to overload, sputtering with electricity. The sounds from ear-splitting alarms filled the room, almost deafening them all.

Apta roared so loud that it hurt the eardrums of Mermista, Spinnerella, Frosta, Netossa, Bow, and her other associates. "We need to evacuate *immediately*! This place is gonna blow!"

Bow was still worried about his friend. He didn't want to leave her out there, despite what she had said to him. "Apta! Is there anything we can do about Glimmer?"

Apta lamented the situation. The portal clearly was not ready for this and she still had tests to do, but Glimmer had thrown all that out the window. It worried her. "I'm afraid not, Bow. The machine has *lost control*. It is becoming burdened with overuse. While some may say that 'spacetime behaves relationally but exists absolutely,' in this case, spacetime is behaving irrationally. They are experiencing the universe *different* from us, and in a horrifying way, which cannot be prevented, causing them to flow through the curvature of the universe, with objects in motion continuing in curved lines…"

One of Apta's comrades, Cuntinuu, whose full name was Cuntinuu Spaziu-Tempu, and nicknamed Tempy, shook her head. She pulled down a lever and the laboratory completely powered down. It appeared extreme, but the only way to stop it from exploding. "I'm sorry, Ms. Entrapta, but I had no choice. I couldn't let your work here go to waste all because one portal went haywire…"

Apta understood. Her workers were *always* on the same wavelength as her. "Tempy, I appreciate your effort…but I worry about the peoples on that ship and Glimmer…I don't want them to die on my watch…"

Tempy sighed. She would do anything for Apta, no matter the cost to herself. "Ms. Entrapta, that won't happen. We need to disconnect the gateway, then restart the power here… otherwise such an event will occur again…"

Apta was a bit relieved. She hoped they could stop anything bad from happening. "That makes sense! Me and Bow will detach the portal from the power grid. Tempy, you lead the Princesses upstairs, so no one is harmed. We'll tell you when we are done."

Tempy complied with her directive. It was logical after all. She had *no reason* to disregard it. "Understood, Ma'am! It will be done as you ordered!"

As the Princesses left the room, Bow and Apta griped. Realizing that Bow could be harmed by residual electric shock, she recommended he put on one of the electrical protection suits she had in storage. Bow followed her advice. Walking into a metal locker, he pulled out a one-size-fits-all suit and put it on top of his clothes. He thought the padded chest area was unusual, but supposed it was only a safety measure. Walking out he announced proudly "ta-da!"

Apta giggled. "You know that's *a woman's suit*, right?"

Bow's cheeks were flushed with red as bright as freshly picked strawberries. Speechless and shocked by this turn of events, Apta continued to laugh. "I guess you like to wear *women's clothes*, Bow…that's fine…I wear *men's clothes* all the time because they can be more comfortable…it's such an artificial distinction."

Bow was flustered. He couldn't believe Apta was doing this in a time like this. "WHAT! I…do…NOT!...Wait, *you* wear men's clothes?"

Apta chuckled. She didn't know why some people were so caught up on clothes being "assigned" to certain genders. It didn't make a lick of sense to her. "Why not? I see *nothing* wrong with it. Fuma does the same thing, sometimes."

Bow was surprised. Perhaps some of Apta's "wild" nature had *rubbed off* onto Fuma. He didn't know. "She…does?"

Apta nodded. She didn't want to talk about this anymore. "Yup. Let's end this worthless conversation…and get to work…"

Bow agreed with this sentiment. This conversation, while illuminating, made him feel *a little uncomfortable*. He didn't mind it coming to a close. "Okay, Apta. I'll work with you to pull the wires out from the wall and the portal itself."

An hour or so later, the task had been completed. Bow was sweating profusely. Apta had snipped the wires and rerouted them, so they connected to the rest of the facility. With this electrical work, you would never know, apart from the gap in space, where the portal once sat, that a portal had *ever* been there. Pulling out her small device, she texted Tempy, telling her to restore electricity to the lab. The lights flickered and the devices began humming once more. Apta breathed in. Her real home, surrounded by machines, her true friends, had come back with a vigor.

Meanwhile, on the plains of spacetime, Glimmer observed the passageway closing in around her. As she scrambled forward, a jolt of electricity propelled her forward, through an opening and into the atmosphere of a strange celestial body. While she escaped the interdimensional corridor from crushing her into thousands of particles, the high voltage knocked her unconscious.

As she rapidly fell the planet's surface, she envisioned her mother, who defected to the other side in the recently concluded civil war on Etheria and her long-lost father, *reportedly* killed in a battle with the Horde. Tears streamed down her face, realizing that she had no friends or support from anyone, completely alone in the universe. That was partially her own doing.

Lars and his fellow comrades on the *OCAC* had problems of their own. The wormhole their ship had entered became more violent. Rhodonite and Pappy huddled in fear while Lars stood strong, refusing to give up without a fight. He ordered the Rutile Twins and Fluorite to give the ship an extra boost, ensuring it would speed through space like a fast-moving bullet.

Almost in sync with their action, an electrical current coursed through the ship, propelling it forward.

Next thing they knew, water was sloshing around the ship, disturbing the Gems and Lars alike. "*How* in the world did we end up on the ocean floor? Last, I can remember, we were being dragged through that ferocious wormhole."

Rhodonite, still a little terrified, responded. "Captain, I'm as perplexed as you are. Even so, I'm glad to be on more solid ground...in a sense."

Like a jack-in-the-box, Pappy blurted out another of her visions: "I forecast we will arrive on the ocean floor of an alien planet…what a mystery!"

This time around, Lars wasn't as amused. He was more scared than anything else. He curtly said, "Thanks, Pappy."

He then exclaimed, "Now, if you had future-vision and past-vision at the same time…that would be *real helpful* about now!"

Suddenly, huge whale-squid passed by the ship, amazing the Off Colors and Lars. They resembled nautiluses, a form of molluscan creatures, which swam in the oceans of the blue planet, "Earth," where Lars and Steven were from. The docile squids scattered, driven away by a legion of yellow-painted Diver Yunboros. These watertight machines, which were used to search the ocean depths for materials to salvage, had propellers, allowing them to maneuver with ease, ballast tanks, and searchlights. Often, they were used to catch fish and had a limited ability for combat since none had weapons of any kind. Their only "defense" was to jettison their limbs, allowing the body to become a life pod which would float to the surface. In this case, the troop of Yunboros, accompanied by a machine with charcoal-grey robotic mechanical arms, which had been revised by its occupant, approached their ship.

Lars and his shipmates squinted, blinded by the searchlights shined in their faces. The Yunboros lifted the *OCAC* to a nearby salvage ship platform atop the choppy ocean surface. One of the machines opened. A 19-year-old woman stepped out. Her dark-blue-eyes stared at the *unwelcome visitors*, who had scrambled out of their spaceship. The warm color of her dark red hair shined in the sunlight. Her face was framed by two bangs with blue, grey, and black beads, tied up in a ponytail which draped down her back. She wore large gold hoop earrings, a metal band on her upper arm, a short dark orange crop top with dark red straps and a pale-yellow frill, tight dark green shorts, and long grey stockings held up by brown straps. Towering at about five feet, five inches tall, she *brazenly hollered* at Lars and his crew. She was joined by an 18-year-old man with silver grey hair, a 21-year-old man with blonde hair, and a few others.

"*Who* are you…and *why* are you *on Earth*?," she asked.

End Notes

I used information from the pages for Steven Universe, the Off Colors, Spinnerella, Netossa, Thaymor, Elberon, Alwyn, and Plumeria on their respective fandom sites. My stories, like this one and the last one, are tending toward space opera, but not totally: "It soon came to be applied instead to colourful action-adventure stories of interplanetary or interstellar conflict. Although the term still retains a faint pejorative implication, it is frequently used with nostalgic affection, applying to space-adventure stories which have a calculatedly romantic element" as defined by the SF Encyclopedia entry. The programs of Alwyn are based on those of the Paris Commune which existed from March to May 1871, ruling Paris. I again reference the show, Tactical Roar, when Rhodonite says "Aye, shorty!" The words "cuntinuu spaziu-tempu" is Corsican for "space-time continuum." I later improved this story by watching "The Off Color Gems & Their Symbolism Explained narrated by Kris Carr on NerdWire. I further referenced Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy when they are approaching Etheria, just for fun.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!